

# Ashburton Airfield Fees Proposal

This proposal has been prepared and submitted by AOPA (NZ) and Ashburton Airfield Users.



---

## Table of Contents

1. Definitions	3
2. Preface	4
3. Ashburton Airport Development Plan 2022-2052	4
4. Comparison of other small airfield Landing Fees	5
5. Landing Fees - Ashburton Old System	6
6. Landing Fees - Ashburton Current System 2023 - 2024	6
7. Landing Fees - ADC Proposal for 2024/25	7
8. Effect of Landing Fees on Training Flights	8
9. Effect of Landing Fees on Recreational Users	8
10. Risks and Safety	8
11. Proposal	9

---

# 1. Definitions

- **Landing** : When the aircraft lands and terminates the flight. Often referred to as a “Full Stop Landing”. A Landing Fee typically includes a Take-off at most airfields. A number of smaller Airports choose not to charge landing fees.
- **Touch and Go** : While learning to fly, students and instructors typically fly a circuit comprising of a takeoff, rectangular flight pattern, and a landing. The aircraft then takes off again, to repeat the exercise. This is known as a circuit, with a touch and go landing. Most flying training institutions encourage touch and go landings as a way to improve pilot currency, and therefore improve safety.
- During a circuit training session for ab initio students, a student will typically fly between 6 and 10 touch and go's. Each circuit takes approximately 5 -10 minutes (depending on a variety of factors), with a training session usually lasting between 40 - 60 minutes.
- It is common for flying students from external flying institutions to perform a touch and go landing at airfields such as Ashburton during cross-country navigation exercises. Throughout NZ, accepted practice is that these type of touch and go landings (where the flight originates at another airfield) are usually charged as one full landing fee.
- NZ CAA regulations stipulate a minimum number of landings that pilots must carry out to remain “current” in order to carry passengers, usually in the order of 3 landings every 90 days.
- **Airport** : A complex of runways and buildings for the take-off, landing, and maintenance of civil aircraft, with facilities for passengers. Airports often describe areas with tar sealed runways, passenger terminals, control towers and significant infrastructure investment. It is common for larger airports to charge higher landing fees that reflect the investment in infrastructure and maintenance requirements.
- **Airfield** : A level area where aircraft can take off and land, with fewer buildings and services than an airport and used by fewer passengers. Historically the term airfield was used to denote a grass field used for takeoff and landing, and more recently describes a large grass “field” with mown grass runways. A number of smaller airfields don't charge landing fees.
- **Annual Bulk Landing Fee** : Many airfields offer a Bulk Annual Landing Fee to locally based recreational pilots. It is similar to a season pass and reduces administration costs. It also incentivises pilots to maintain flying currency by practicing landings, and is viewed by many in the industry as a safety incentive.
- **Weight Based Landing Fee** : Larger airports often use a per ton weight based charging system. This reflects the maintenance associated with the Runway/Taxiway Pavement Bearing Strength requirements. These charges are based on the aircraft MCTOW (Maximum Capacity Takeoff Weight).
- Lighter passenger (19-70 seater) aircraft weights are typically in the 5-20 ton range, with heavy aircraft weights being up to 400 tons. At small provincial airfields where the majority of aircraft (1,2,4 seaters) weights are under 2 tons, a simple landing fee is usually applied across the board, sometimes with a lower fee for small microlight aircraft.
- **Movement Data Collection** : CAA require airfields to collect and present aircraft movement data. This has resulted in many airfields installing complex data collection systems, employing people to collect the data, or taking subscriptions with companies that collect and publish the data.
- **ADC** : Ashburton District Council
- **MCAC** : Mid Canterbury Aero Club
- **AAP** : Ashburton Aviation Pioneers - Part 149 Training organisation

---

## 2. Preface

Ashburton Airfield lies on the outskirts on Ashburton and is home to the following :

- Mid Canterbury Aero Club (MCAC) and Ashburton Aviation Pioneers (AAP)
- Ashburton Aviation Museum
- Ashburton Speedway
- Recreation Aircraft Hangars
- Part time Aviation Maintenance Workshop

The airfield was originally established during the early 20th century and has been predominantly used for pilot training and recreational flying. It is considered a community asset.

### **Civil Emergency, Disaster Relief and Military Operations**

In addition to supporting recreational aviation and flying training, the airfield has played a significant role in previous years during Civil Emergencies, Military Exercises, and Disaster Relief.

### **Infrastructure**

Like many small community airfields, investment in infrastructure is minimal, consisting largely of the perimeter fences, gates, runway marker boards, reflectors, runway lights, and signage. It has 4 grass runways, one runway having lights for night time operations. There is no passenger terminal, no tar sealed runways, and no instrument approaches. This has historically kept operating costs and administrative overheads low.

### **Hangars**

A number of recreational users have built hangars on leasehold ground (leased from the Ashburton District Council). Most of these hangars are without power or water and those that have power have had to bear the cost of trenching and cabling from the roadside to the individual hangars due to the ADC reluctance to contribute to infrastructure costs.

### **Operations**

Ashburton Airfield regularly plays host to fly-in gatherings such as Aerobatic Competitions, National Aeroclub Competitions, and external Aero-club Fly-aways. Due to its convenient proximity, touring recreational aircraft regularly overnight or call in for fuel. There are currently no scheduled air services, no commercial operations, and no full time businesses operating from Ashburton Airfield.

---

## 3. Ashburton Airport Development Plan 2022-2052

In 2022, ADC published the **Ashburton Airport Development Plan (2022-2052)**. It states the following:

- Ashburton Airport has traditionally had two sources of income: site leases and landing fees. The shortfall between its income and annual expenses has been covered by Council rates. Each year, rates have generally accounted for more than half of the Airport's funding. For the 2021/22 year, \$92,558 of rates had been budgeted for the Airport.
- The Council believes Ashburton Airport has the potential to generate more income from rents and landing charges to reduce rates funding.

Currently an overwhelming burden of costs are being shouldered by a small group of recreational aircraft owners. Landing fees are not applied evenly to all users, with some outside training institutions receiving heavy discounts, and some being given exemptions from landing fees,

Rising ADC Council administrative costs are adding to this burden.

## 4. Comparison of other small airfield Landing Fees

The table below shows landing fees at a 41 smaller airfields across NZ. Larger airports with significant infrastructure investment have been excluded. Some airfields charged higher rates for larger passenger aircraft and in these cases the rate for a typical light aircraft such as a C172 is shown.

Eight of the airfields surveyed offer a Bulk Annual Landing fee. Whakatane is notable in not charging landing fees for visiting GA aircraft, and offering all locally based recreational pilots an annual bulk landing fee.

- The average landing fee charge for airports with sealed runways is **\$10.01**.
- The average landing fee for airfields with grass / gravel runways is **\$7.74**.
- The median landing fee for airfields in the table is **\$10**.
- For clarification, the Bulk Annual Landing Fees in the table are per year (not quarterly).
- Those airfields charging Bulk Annual Landing Fees above **\$150** all have sealed runways.

### Light aircraft landing fees

Airport	Runway Surface	Landing Fee	Annual Bulk Fee	Notes
Anama	Grass	\$0.00		
Forest Field	Grass	\$0.00		
Rangitata Island	Grass	\$0.00		
Waimate	Grass	\$0.00		
Gore	Grass	\$0.00		
Hanmer	Grass	\$0.00		
Cromwell	Grass	\$5.00		Honesty system
Mandeville	Grass	\$5.00		Honesty system
Murchison	Grass	\$5.00		Honesty system
Centre Bush	Grass	\$7.50		Honesty system
Omaka	Grass	\$10.00	\$100	Unlimited landings same day
Te Kowhai	Grass	\$10.00	\$100	One land fee per session
Masterton	Grass	\$10.00	\$160	Includes up to 5 landings a day
Balclutha	Grass	\$10.00		One land fee per session
Lake Station	Grass	\$10.00		Honesty system
Rangiora	Grass	\$10.00		Unlimited landings same day
Cromwell	Grass	\$10.00		
Taieri	Grass	\$11.00		
Omarama	Grass	\$15.00		
Pauanui	Grass	\$15.00		Unlimited landings same day
Glenorchy	Grass	\$18.00		
Haast	Gravel	\$10.00		Honesty system
Whakatane	Seal	\$0.00	\$200	Free for visiting GA aircraft, annual fee for local aircraft
Oamaru	Seal	\$8.00		One land fee per session
Tokoroa	Seal	\$10.00	\$182	One land fee per session
Motueka	Seal	\$10.00	\$250	One land fee per hour
Takaka	Seal	\$10.00	\$250	One land fee per hour
Alexandra	Seal	\$10.00		Honesty system
Greymouth	Seal	\$10.00		One land fee per session
Karamea	Seal	\$10.00		Honesty system
Pukaki	Seal	\$10.00		
Tauranga	Seal	\$10.00		One land fee per session
Wanaka	Seal	\$10.00		
Westport	Seal	\$10.00		One land fee per session
Wanaka	Seal	\$10.00		Unlimited for 30 Mins
Timaru	Seal	\$10.50	\$150	One land fee per session
Palmerston North	Seal	\$10.50		
Kaikoura	Seal	\$11.50		
Invercargill	Seal	\$12.00		
Whangarei	Seal	\$12.60		
Paraparaumu	Seal	\$15.00		One land fee per session

---

## 5. Landing Fees - Ashburton Old System

1. \$10 per day.
2. Honesty box system.
3. Annual bulk landing fee of \$130 per annum for local recreation users.

These fees were largely aligned with other similar small airfields across NZ (noting that many airfields don't charge any landing fees.)

---

## 6. Landing Fees - Ashburton Current System 2023 - 2024

1. Landing fees were increased to \$12 per landing in 2023.
2. A touch and go fee of \$3 per touch and go was introduced.
3. A new aircraft movement data collection system was implemented based on monitoring aircraft radio calls and aircraft ADSB output.
4. **No Risk Assessment** was conducted prior to implementing these changes.
5. **No Consultation with Users** was conducted - the changes were unilaterally implemented.
6. External commercial training organisations were given significant discounts on landing fees.
7. Some aircraft were completely exempted from paying landing fees.
8. Local recreation users were charged the full \$12 per landing (\$9 for a microlight) and a further \$3 per touch and go.
9. The Annual Bulk Landing Fee for local recreational users was abolished (existing users were grandfathered for a further 12 months before termination).

*The following points are noted :*

1. During the same time period, the number of landings being carried out decreased by **1700 landings** Year on Year. (Source: ADC Activity Report February 2024, Page 105 "Aircraft Movements at Ashburton Airport")
2. Externally based aircraft performing touch and go's at Ashburton Airfield were mistakenly charged a \$3 touch and go fee instead of the full landing fee that is accepted practice throughout NZ.
3. When viewed by training cost, Ashburton Airfield became the single most expensive small airfield in NZ, at over triple the circuit training landing fee cost of most other comparable airfields.
4. The negative economic effect of flying practice circuits has been mainly confined to locally based recreational aircraft.
5. If the policy had been applied in a fair manner to all users, then the reduction in number of landings may have been significantly more.
6. The Ashburton Airfield User Working Group have raised safety concerns (29 February User Working Group Meeting) directly with the Ashburton District Council over the negative economic incentive, safety, and subsequent reduction in number of circuits, take-offs, and landings being carried out by pilots.

## 7. Landing Fees - ADC Proposal for 2024/25

The Ashburton District Council **2024/25 Proposed Fees & Charges** show another new landing fee structure proposal, summarised as follows :

1. A Fixed Wing Landing Fee of \$10 per ton based on MCTOW for a landing.
2. A Fixed Wing Training Circuit Fee (per 20 minutes) of \$10.
3. No Annual Bulk Landing Fee.

This second proposed change seeks to rectify the unintended negative consequence of charging per touch and go. It proposes to charge per 20 minute time block for a fixed wing training aircraft. This will likely result in a typical circuit training flight being charged \$30. (See Section 8).

*It isn't clear from the ADC proposal whether the Fixed wing training circuit Fee :*

4. Will be combined in any way with a Fixed wing landing fee.
5. Applies equally to privately owned recreational aircraft, while doing practice circuits.
6. Applies to the resident MCAC (where a per aircraft Bulk Annual Fee might be negotiated).

### 25.0 Ashburton Airport

**Please note:** The landing fees in the table below do not apply to commercial operators or events. Casual landing fees or annual landing fees for commercial operators or events must be agreed directly with Council's Property Manager.

		1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024	1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025
<b>25.1</b>	<b>Aeronautical Charges</b>		
	Fixed wing training circuit* (per 20 minutes)	New charge (previous \$3.00 per touch and go movement)	\$10.00
	Fixed wing landing fee (per landing, based off Maximum Capacity Take Off Weight - MCTOW)	\$9.00	\$10.00 per Tonne (minimum charge \$10)
	Helicopter landing fee (per landing)	\$12.00	\$13.00
	<b>Failure to pay aeronautical charge**</b>		
	1 <sup>st</sup> offence	\$40.00	\$40.00
	2 <sup>nd</sup> offence	\$100.00	\$100.00

*\* Transitioning Aircraft completing a training circuit includes touch and go's, go arounds, missed approaches and landing. Additional movements after 20 minutes will incur a new training circuit charge.*

*\*\* Failure to pay means the aeronautical charge is unpaid by the due date of the invoice*

---

## 8. Effect of Landing Fees on Training Flights

Most training organisations allow aircraft bookings by the hour, resulting in many training flights lasting for shortly less than one hour. This is reflected in the data below pertaining to circuit training flights.

**Data provided by MCAC for Circuit Training Flights over a 4 month period (73 flights) shows :**

- The average circuit training flight was 51 minutes.
- 23% were one hour or longer.

**Under the current Landing Fee system :**

- 64% of the circuit training flights would be paying \$39 or more in landing fees per session.
- 12% of the circuit training flights would have accumulated landing fees of \$50 or higher.

**Under the new ADC proposed system**

- The average landing fee would have been \$30.
- 23% of those flights would have paid \$40 or more in landing fees.

**Other NZ Airfields**

- By comparison, one hour of Training Circuits at most comparable regional airfields across NZ would incur a Landing Fee of \$10.

---

## 9. Effect of Landing Fees on Recreational Users

In 2023, ADC announced that it was abolishing the **Bulk Annual Landing Fee** of \$130 per annum. Existing users were grandfathered until mid 2024 whereupon the scheme will be discontinued and all users will be required to pay \$12 per landing and \$3 per touch and go.

- For a typical recreational flyer who operates 50 flights per year (approximately one flight per week), the cost of landing fees has increased from \$130 (Bulk Annual Landing Fee) to \$600 (based on 50 flights per year), **an increase of 361%**. This assumes only one landing per flight.
- For recreational pilots who fly practice landings on a regular basis, the cost increase is significantly higher.

---

## 10. Risks and Safety

- Fees that are set too high may act either as a barrier to entry, or as an economic disincentive.
- This can be seen from the **decrease in number of landings (1700 year on year)** coincident with when ADC raised the Ashburton Airfield Landing Fees to \$12 and introduced the \$3 touch and go fee.
- The economic effect on circuit training practice and safety needs to be considered.
- Most training flights are booked on an hourly basis. A landing fee that is valid for all landings within one hour aligns with the booking practice and thereby removes most time pressure.
- A landing fee that is increasing every 20 minutes (as is the current case) may inadvertently incentivise hurrying, or incentivise restricting a flight to fit the nearest 20 minute block.
- It is common for recreational aircraft owners to fly several landings in a day.

---

## 11. Proposal

**AOPA (NZ) and The Ashburton Airfield Users together propose the following Landing Fee Structure :**

- **Bulk Annual Landing Fee** - \$200 per annum per aircraft, paid in advance. Applicable to recreational aircraft owners anywhere in NZ.
- **Individual Landing Fee** - \$12 per landing (to include all landings for up to one hour). Applicable to anyone who doesn't sign up for the above Bulk Annual Landing Fee.
- MCAC (to be decided) will probably be a higher annual fee to reflect the higher daily usage, and will average out to a lower cost per landing over a year.
- Ashburton Aviation Pioneers (to be decided - probably as above).

### **Comments:**

- Although the \$200 Bulk Annual Landing Fee represents a sizeable 54% increase over the previous \$130, it aligns with Annual Fees of other similar airfields.
- The \$12 Individual Landing Fee is still 20% above the median landing fee for similar airfields, and 55% higher than the average for those with only grass runways. It gives a sizeable inflation adjustment, and accounts for multiple landings in one session.
- The above Landing Fee structure should provide airfield users with a *choice* of opting in to an annual bulk landing fee, or paying per hour.
- This should incentivise people to sign up for the Bulk Annual Landing Fee and aims to reduce administrative overheads.
- The **Bulk Annual Landing Fee**, should incentivise practice, currency, and safety, by encouraging circuit practice without economic disincentive.
- The **Individual Landing Fee** (per hour), incentivises practice and safety by allowing the majority of circuit training flights to be completed without rushing.
- These fees are in line with most other small NZ regional airfields.
- We recommend that the Landing Fee Scheme is applied evenly and fairly to all users.